

Category Two – Youth Project

Blacktown City Council and Liverpool Plains Shire Council; Porirua, New Zealand; and Suseong-gu, Daegu City, South Korea

The International Youth Connect Project (IYCP) was held in Quirindi NSW as part of our Community Partnership Program (CPP) which was established in 2015 with the Liverpool Plains Shire Council (LPSC). The CPP is a specific strategy in our International Links and Sister Cities Strategic Plan.

The IYCP comprised a number of components these being:

- a. An International Youth Conference and World Café for nominated Year 10 students.
- b. Hosting of a series of rap, hip hop and dance workshops for schools and interested youth from the LPSC by Rap 4 Change, a not for profit organisation from Mt. Druitt, Blacktown that has a focus on supporting youth in a fun and engaging way.
- c. The International Youth Games for under 14 year old competitors and officials.
- d. A Showcase for youth to display their talent as part of the cultural and entertainment component of the project.
- e. The opportunity for city and overseas visitors to experience a taste of country first hand.

Just over 160 students from Blacktown City, its Sister City partners in Porirua City, New Zealand, Suseong-gu, Daegu City, Republic of Korea, LPSC, New South Wales, and the Maori Wardens Australia travelled to Quirindi either by bus or train to participate in their selected and/or nominated activity. Students were supervised by staff and/or chaperones during their weekend visit to Quirindi.

The Rap 4 Change workshops engaged with over 140 primary, high school students and interested youth during the four workshops they conducted.

The youth project sought to:

- a. Foster youth leadership and guidance through the International Youth Conference and World Café with Jessica Watson OAM as the guest presenter.
- b. Allow country students and pupils to experience first-hand, rap, hip hop and dance through a series of workshops conducted by Rap 4 Change.
- c. Promote youth sport and participation through a variety of sports at the under 14 age level.
- d. Encourage youth performers to showcase their talent while enhancing individual professional development.
- e. Allow city students and pupils to enjoy a taste of country with visits to properties to experience hands on farm activities such as feeding calves, seeing sheep dogs in action, whip cracking, inspect machinery and cattle raising.
- f. Allow country students and pupils to interact with their city cousins and overseas visitors to broaden their awareness of culture and race diversity.

The project was facilitated by Blacktown Council's Sister Cities Project Officers, Blacktown Council's Children and Youth Development Officer, Blacktown Council's Senior Events Officer, Manager LPSC Visitor Information Centre, LPSC Events and Youth Officer, Quirindi High School Community Liaison and Media Officer, Rap 4 Change and several local property owners.

Input for the format of the Conference and topics for the World Café was obtained from Youth Ambassadors and the youth leaders from the participating High Schools.

Students participated at the International Youth Games in either basketball, soccer, netball and rugby union while several youth acted as officials or first aid attendants.

Selected young performers also showcased their talents as part of the cultural and entertainment aspect of the project.

All visiting youth had the opportunity to visit at least one country property and experience a range of farm activities. For over 90%, this was their first time in the country.

The opportunity for youth from a wide variety of backgrounds, nationalities and origins to interact, participate and socialise in a small country town in New South Wales with representatives from four Sister Cities in the one place at the one time was a unique and once in a lifetime experience.

The project was branded under the Sister Cities banner.